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ABSTRACT

This book discusses and evaluates the implications of the theory of deconstruction for composition and pedagogy. The book analyzes the emerging field of composition studies within the epistemological and ontological debate over writing precipitated by Plato (who would abandon writing entirely) and continued by Jacques Derrida, who argues that all human beings write well. This book offers a three-part exploration of the debate. The first part, a deconstructive reading of Plato's "Phaedrus," shows the elaborate sleight of hand that Plato must employ as he uses writing and sophistry to engage in a semblance of spoken dialogue. The second part describes Derrida's theory of writing and demonstrates how Derridean analysis collapses of its own weight. The concluding section juxtaposes the implications of both Platonic and Derridean views of writing, warning that the latter may lock writing inside philosophy. The conclusion of the book suggests that writing may be liberated from philosophical judgment by turning to Derrida's predecessors, the sophists, particularly Protagoras and Gorgias.
(KEH)

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